



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Robert M. Summers
Acting Secretary of the Environment
Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Boulevard
Baltimore, Maryland 21230

Dear Acting Secretary Summers:

We want to thank you and your staff for your willingness to discuss a framework to provide certainty to farmers who implement practices that protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. It is our hope that we have developed a constructive framework that states can use in providing to producers incentives and recognition that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices and advance the objectives of your state watershed implementation plans.

As we at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have discussed with you and your staff, certainty is viewed as a tool that states can use with agricultural producers to help achieve multiple goals for agriculture and water quality, including:

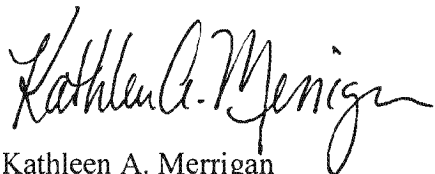
- Increasing producer interest and willingness in adopting Best Management Practices based on farm-specific conservation planning, which, in turn, would increase the pace and extent to which resource conservation and verifiable water-quality improvements are achieved.
- Providing to producers clear and consistent communications on conservation actions consistent with the objectives of the state watershed implementation plans.
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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kathleen A. Merrigan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Kathleen A. Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bob Perciasepe". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable John R. Griffin
Secretary
Maryland Department of Natural Resources
580 Taylor Avenue
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Secretary Griffin:

We want to thank you and your staff for your willingness to discuss a framework to provide certainty to farmers who implement practices that protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. It is our hope that we have developed a constructive framework that states can use in providing to producers incentives and recognition that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices and advance the objectives of your state watershed implementation plans.

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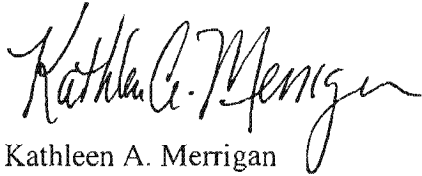
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Kathleen A. Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Collin O'Mara
Secretary
Delaware Department of Environment and Energy
89 Kings Highway
Dover, Delaware 19901

Dear Secretary O'Mara:

We want to thank you and your staff for your willingness to discuss a framework to provide certainty to farmers who implement practices that protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. It is our hope that we have developed a constructive framework that states can use in providing to producers incentives and recognition that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices and advance the objectives of your state watershed implementation plans.

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Kathleen A. Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Thomas J. Quigley
Secretary
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Post Office Box 202146
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120-2146

Dear Secretary Quigley:

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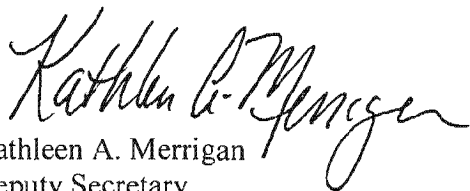
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Kathleen A. Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable John Hangar
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
Post Office Box 2063
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17105-2063

Dear Secretary Hangar:

We want to thank you and your staff for your willingness to discuss a framework to provide certainty to farmers who implement practices that protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. It is our hope that we have developed a constructive framework that states can use in providing to producers incentives and recognition that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices and advance the objectives of your state watershed implementation plans.

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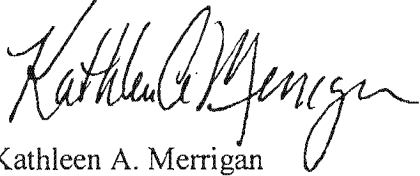
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Kathleen A. Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Douglas W. Domenich
Secretary
Natural Resources Secretariat
Post Office Box 1475
Richmond, Virginia 23218

Dear Secretary Domenich:

We want to thank you and your staff for your willingness to discuss a framework to provide certainty to farmers who implement practices that protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. It is our hope that we have developed a constructive framework that states can use in providing to producers incentives and recognition that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices and advance the objectives of your state watershed implementation plans.

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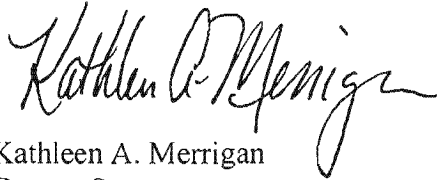
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Kathleen A. Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Gus Douglass
Commissioner
West Virginia Department of Agriculture
1900 Kanawha Boulevard
East Charleston, West Virginia 25305

Dear Commissioner Douglass:

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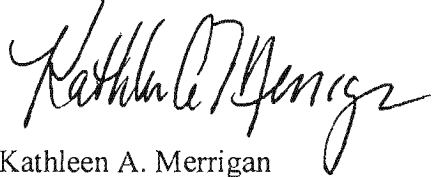
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Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Matt Lohr
Commissioner
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
102 Governor Street
Richmond, Virginia 23218

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U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Russell Redding
Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
2301 North Cameron Street
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17110-94078

Dear Secretary Redding:

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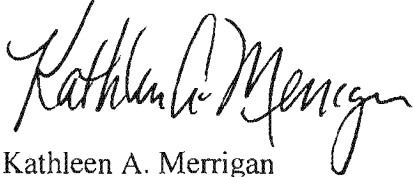
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Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
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December 22, 2010

The Honorable Patrick Hooker
Secretary
New York Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, New York 12235

Dear Secretary Hooker:

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Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Peter Iwanowicz
Commissioner
New York Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, New York 12233-1011

Dear Commissioner Iwanowicz:

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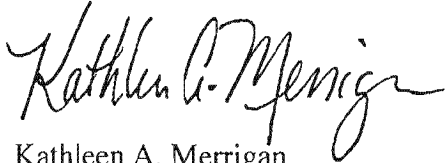
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U.S. Department of Agriculture



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December 22, 2010

The Honorable Ed Kee
Secretary
Delaware Department of Agriculture
2320 South DuPont Highway
Dover, Delaware 19901

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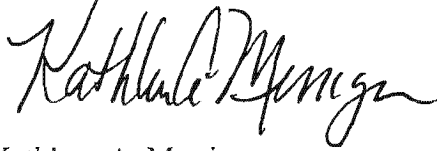
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Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Randy Huffman
Secretary
Department of Environmental Protection
601 57th Street, SE Building 20029, Room 3009
Charleston, West Virginia 25304

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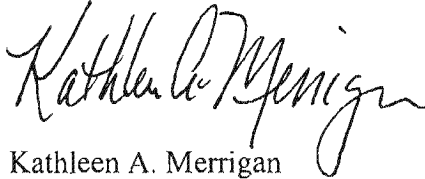
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The Honorable Buddy Hance
Secretary
Maryland Department of Agriculture
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Secretary Hance:

We want to thank you and your staff for your willingness to discuss a framework to provide certainty to farmers who implement practices that protect water quality in the Chesapeake Bay. It is our hope that we have developed a constructive framework that states can use in providing to producers incentives and recognition that accelerate the adoption of conservation practices and advance the objectives of your state watershed implementation plans.

As we at the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency have discussed with you and your staff, certainty is viewed as a tool that states can use with agricultural producers to help achieve multiple goals for agriculture and water quality, including:

- Increasing producer interest and willingness in adopting Best Management Practices based on farm-specific conservation planning, which, in turn, would increase the pace and extent to which resource conservation and verifiable water-quality improvements are achieved.
- Providing to producers clear and consistent communications on conservation actions consistent with the objectives of the state watershed implementation plans.
- Providing assurance to agricultural business operations that investments in conservation practices will provide benefits for farms and water quality consistent with state watershed implementation plans.

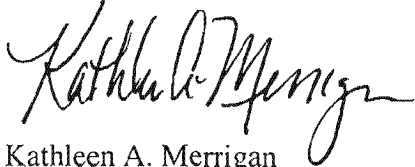
While this is an effort best done at the state level, USDA and the EPA are willing to support to you as you develop a state certainty program. As discussed earlier this month, by January 15, 2011, the six Chesapeake Bay basin state agriculture secretaries will follow up with their USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) state conservationists to confirm interest in pursuing a certainty program. In turning this framework into a practical tool, you are encouraged to call on USDA and EPA staff for assistance. The NRCS stands ready to help you develop farm-specific plans to support such a program.

The Honorable Buddy Hance

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USDA and the EPA believe that maintaining agriculture's viability is an essential component to sustaining ecosystems in the Chesapeake Bay basin. We are committed to strong partnerships and collaboration with states, and we very much appreciate your contributions to improving the bay. We look forward to working with you on this and other issues to ensure a healthy basin ecosystem, strong rural communities and a vital agricultural sector.

Sincerely,



Kathleen A. Merrigan
Deputy Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Bob Perciasepe
Deputy Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



December 22, 2010

The Honorable Frank Jezioro
Director
Department of Natural Resources
Building 74, 324 Fourth Avenue
South Charleston, West Virginia 25303

Dear Director Jezioro:

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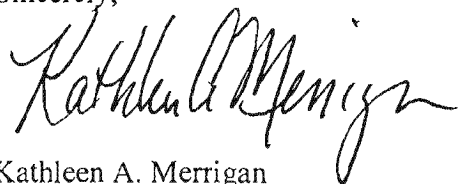
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The Honorable Frank Jezioro

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